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## Exploration and Discovery.

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### THE WORK OF THE ARCHÆOLOGICAL SURVEY OF EGYPT.

FOR three years now that Anglo-American organization, the Archæological Survey of Egypt, has been engaged on an unsensational but much-needed enterprise in the hills surrounding the plain of el-Amarna, now desert and bare, but once the theater of the brief drama which the sun-worshipping King Akhetaten enacted here, when on its sands he founded a capital rich in art treasures, with a vast temple to the sole deity whom he recognized, laid out chariot roads which still score the waste, and spent his time in loving his wife and his family of girls, in teaching his people the true religion, in erecting handsome buildings, and in hewing art tombs for his favorite officials, which served, it must be confessed, more for his own commemoration than for theirs.

It is these tombs which have now been copied, by no means for the first time, but for the first time *in extenso* and with a view to immediate publication in a form accessible to the public. To the eye the tombs are scarcely attractive. They are dark and dirty; the art style is novel and illy executed; their architecture has been mutilated; and as a crowning injury a scoundrelly native lately battered out a large part of the religious texts. Such tombs are a great disappointment to the devout pilgrim; they are best seen in publications, where a large part of these detractions are removed and the real value is perceived. It has been found, for instance, that the mutilations, which at first sight are heart-breaking, can in very large measure be made good from the early copies of Nestor l'Hôte and Lepsius, and from duplicate texts. What renders the tombs disappointing to the tourist is even a more serious trouble to the copyist, so that the task of publishing them has been a long and heavy one. No great discovery has been made; but the exact and complete reproduction of the scenes and texts is the first requisite to a real comprehension of one of the most interesting chapters in the history of religion, and of revolutions of thought and practice. And everyone will delight in these pictures of the King driving his spirited horses, enjoying his repast to the sound of music, carried in state at public functions, distributing rewards to his officials, and on all occa-

sions, public and private, sharing all honor and enjoyment with his affectionate consort and children. The detailed pictures and plans of the buildings of his city Akhetaten, which, save for some poor relics, are preserved only in these sculptures, are a special feature of the publication. Perhaps the most sorely needed person in Egypt today (next to an official who is determined that the monuments shall be protected) is that humble individual, the copyist.

Historic periods are generally supposed to be separated from pre-historic by the use of writing. However much the handiwork of a people may excite admiration and undesignedly reflect its temper, the expressed thought of a nation is its highest product. We rightly prize a myth added to folklore more than a carved paddle preserved for the museum; and this apart from the consideration that the one is an undying treasure, while the life of the museum specimen is, as Professor Petrie has lately pointed out, highly precarious.

It is surprising, therefore, that explorers who seek new material for Egyptology number ten archæologists to one linguist, ten excavators to one copyist. This preponderance is perhaps a sign that Egyptology scarcely yet ranks among the dignified sciences. The digger is still its hero, and there are few that enter it by the strait gate or appreciate it without the added gusto of the gold-digger, the *antika* collector, and the art virtuoso. But it is also due to the illusion that inscriptions that can be found at will are already found, and to the truth that the copy of a known monument will hardly arouse sensation, even though the destruction of the text may have been imminent. And while the excavator employs laborers to dig, the explorer of records has usually to bring away his discovery in a self-made copy—a task often of no small magnitude. For it is the charm of Egyptian literature that its books are illustrated, and there is child enough in us still to make us not wholly sorry that in the pages the illustrations so often crowd out the text. Nor is the enterprise so light today as it was when our present collection of records was made. As it is being recognized that the excavator is not a new and more dignified Aladdin, so it becomes increasingly evident that no publication is worthy the name that is contented with a selection of the most attractive scenes and with roughly copied texts; but that Egyptian philology has reached a point where minute detail and the utmost grammatical and paleographical accuracy are required. This task must find its motive and reward in the reverence for knowledge as such, and apart from its present valuation. A faithful copy may at any moment span the gulf between the

irrevocable loss and the eternal gain of an item in the sum of knowledge; and what value these items from the unique treasure of ancient Egypt and Babylonia have, the men of a thousand years hence, not we, are the rightful judges. We may be assured that they will accept our facts gratefully, and hand us back our theories and fancies as things which were their own reward in their own day.

The real peril to which these precious records are exposed and the imperfection of extant copies cry for a successor to the great Prussian expedition of 1842-45. Few are at work in the field. Here and there a fragment is published which has lately been unearthed, has captured the fancy of some amateur, or excited the special interest of a traveling *savant*. For the rest, the *Mission archéologique française*, under M. Chassinat, and the Archæological Survey of the Egypt Exploration Fund, make regular additions to the monumental records. Whether the limitations that French copyists observe are atoned for by the wide field they cover, must be submitted to the judgment of the future. The high standard of the Anglo-American organization is assured in the person of its devoted director, Mr. F. Ll. Griffith; but the output is correspondingly restricted, and it has long looked for sister-expeditions to divide the field. There is a rumor that this salvation is to come shortly from America, which has already shown devotion to pure research in Egypt. It would be a fine token of gratitude for the libraries with which centuries of European labor have provided her, if she helped in this much-needed way to make known to the Old World its oldest past.

N. DE GARIS DAVIES.

TEL EL-AMARNA, EGYPT.

#### THE LATEST FROM EGYPT.

It is hardly necessary to tell our readers that the place from which Mr. Davies writes his interesting letter is the famous deserted city, Tel el-Amarna, which gave its name to the now well-known collection of cuneiform letters found there. Subscribers to the Archæological Survey will be familiar with the excellent volumes which Mr. Davies has already published; but if they could stand for days on a torturing ladder, straining the eyes upon the battered walls in the gloom of one of those Amarna tombs, as the present writer has done, they would appreciate the personal self-sacrifice, for the sake of science, involved in the work he is doing.

A letter from Mr. Theodore M. Davis, of Newport, brings good news of the progress of his excavations at Thebes. He has been at